

Supercharge

It isn't everyday that Quad updates its electrostatic loudspeakers, so the new ESL-2812 and 2912 are important products, says **David Price**...

PRICE: £6,500–£8,000
AVAILABLE: NOW
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As its name suggests, Quad's first ELS-57 electrostatic loudspeaker appeared in 1957, just one year after the Morris 1000 motor car made its debut on British roads. But the iconic Quad speaker has endured rather better, with relatively little change over the intervening fifty five years, showing the inherent rightness of the superb original design...

Unlike conventional moving coil loudspeakers, electrostatics are effectively panels of Mylar film held between two electrically conductive grids. They're able to move very large amounts of air relative to the tiny deflection of the film, which is very light and linear in operation. The advantages of this include superb transient speed and low distortion, as well as the complete absence of the many problems that conventional speakers suffer from. It makes for a very open, clean and subtle sound, especially across the midband.

Over the years, Quad has refined the panels and the enclosures into which they're set, the last change coming in 2005 with the ESL-2805 and ESL-2905 receiving substantially more rigid housings among other technical refinements.

And now, the new '12 series Quads continue to refine the technology. As per their predecessors, they sport

four and six electrostatic panels in the ESL-2812 and 2912 respectively. Quad says the two inner panels utilise concentric rings of electrodes to deliver pinpoint imaging from an ideal point source, for superior stereo imagery. All panels are held within a high-mass structure of tensioned aluminium extrusions coupled to stainless steel supports.

The new speakers also have an improved power supply on a new two-layer printed circuit board, which ensures optimum insulation and distance between contacts and a symmetrical layout for the components. This new layout also gives an improvement in cable dressing, and new components are fitted, including Vishay metal film resistors and Murata audio-grade capacitors, the company says.

Improved stators are fitted, along with better insulation material which Quad claims makes for improved efficiency and higher power handling – welcome news as its previous generation electrostatic speakers weren't particularly strong in this respect. Visual indication of overload (and the tripping of the protection circuitry) is now provided, usefully. The new ESLs are slightly taller, narrower and less deep than their predecessors, and a new net cloth has been specified to cover the



elements, delivering superior audio transparency, Quad says.

The new ESL-2812s and 2912s are out now, and well worth auditioning if you're looking for loudspeakers that do things differently.

These new Quads are well worth auditioning if you're looking for speakers that do things differently...

Two's company

A DECADE AGO, THE JAPANESE WERE ABANDONING TWO CHANNEL FASTER THAN YOU COULD SAY 'SUSHI'.

Lest we forget, multichannel was the way ahead – apparently – and we were all going to have between six and eight loudspeakers in our listening room, whereupon we'd be transported to hitherto unknown audio delights... Ermm, how's that working out for you guys now?

Home cinema is, of course, a fine and noble pursuit, but it never managed to usurp two-channel in the hearts and minds of music lovers. How so? Well you don't need more speakers than your local multiplex movie theatre to get a truly immersive audio experience – anyone with a decently set-up stereo will have this, even from a relatively modest outlay. Also, the prospect of having no room to move in your living room, lest you accidentally fall over your subwoofer, meant that multi-speaker systems didn't appeal to all.

Now in 2013, stereo's experiencing something of a renaissance, and a number of Japanese marques have 'come back' to two-channel. Pioneer's new models show just how seriously they're taking it, with some great new affordable electronics. The new £500 PD-50-K Super Audio CD player features Rigid Under Base technology, an aluminium front panel and twin transformers, along with short audio signal paths. It uses a Hi-bit DSP technology, and there's a iPod/iPhone/iPad connection via a front USB port which plays MP3, MPEG-4, AAC, WMA and DSD files.

Partnering this silver disc spinner is the new £800 A-70-K amplifier. 'Extensively tuned by several of the world's leading sound technicians', it has AIR Studios' seal of approval, no less. A Class D design boasting 90W RMS per channel, it boats 'high-grade' components, a rigid under-base and a 32-bit/192kHz ESS SABRE32 Audio DAC. Twin power transformers are provided for power amplifier and the preamp, each shielded separately. Watch out for a review soon!

